

Nocturnal Me by jlondonk

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Summary:

Nancy and Jonathan's journey through the forest after their fight.

1. Chapter 1

Being mean to Nancy Wheeler did not come easily to him.

In fact, Jonathan thought, it was pretty damn hard to shout at her about being nothing more than a suburban girl rebelling but she had started talking about Steve, defending him, wanting him to see why she would ever date that jerk and he had simply snapped.

Jonathan didn't like Steve. He didn't like Steve and he didn't like that Nancy liked him. It was pathetic, really, that he should think about these things while Will was still missing.

Walking through the woods after their heated exchange had been difficult. They were, after all, still looking for that thing, that thing without a face but Jonathan was distracted, endlessly distracted...by her breathing, by her frosty silence, by how he could smell her shampoo even though she wasn't even walking that close to him.

When it got dark, they still hadn't really talked to each other and he wondered whether she regretted her words as much as he regretted his. When he couldn't hear her footsteps anymore, he turned.

Nancy had stopped a few feet away from him, frowning in the darkness.

"What, are you tired?"

It came out harsher than intended but Jonathan couldn't help himself. He suppressed the urge to flinch.

"Shut up."

"What?"

"I heard something."

And now that he listened, he heard it too. Whimpering. In the darkness. A chill crept over him as they slowly moved towards the noise and then he heard Nancy gasp.

The bleeding deer was barely breathing and was inhaling pathetic gasps of air.

Jonathan's heart constricted at the sight.

"It's been hit by a car."

Nancy reached out her hand, lightly touching the wounded animal.

"We can't just leave it." she said, looking back at him.

Her eyes looked sad and a little glassy and Jonathan absurdly thought of glaciers and snow and that Nancy Wheeler was probably the most frustrating person he'd ever met.

She stared at the gun in her hand for a fraction of a second, balancing it between her delicate fingers, as if she was feeling the true weight of it for the first time. He saw her eyes drift over to the deer, saw her frown and the slight wobble of her lower lip and his arm reached for her before consciously deciding to do so.

"I'll do it."

She hesitated, looking straight at him.

"I thought you said - "

"I'm not Nine anymore."

It was true. He wasn't a child that needed protecting.

Still, when he actually pointed the gun at the creature on the ground before him, Jonathan realised that this was vastly different from shooting at cans. The whimpering subsided for a moment and he thought back to the poor rabbit his father made him kill, to the way it had looked, dead before him, blood coming out the side of his head. He felt Nancy turn her head away, heard her sniffing and she was moving closer to him, probably unconsciously. It calmed and unnerved him at the same time.

He undid the safety and aimed at the head of the deer. It would be quick, he told himself, it would be a kindness. It wouldn't even feel anything. If only his hands would stop shaking.

Jonathan took a deep breath, could almost hear Lonnie's voice in his head, telling him to 'man up' and just 'get it over with'.

The seconds passed as he steeled himself for the shot but then - then the deer was violently yanked back into the darkness, so quickly that Nancy and Jonathan jumped in shock, stumbling away from the bushes in front of them.

"What was that?"

Jonathan looked at Nancy, breathing heavily, raising his flashlight to see the trail of blood on the ground.

It continued through the forrest and he kept turning in every direction, gun clammy in his hands.

"Where did it go?" Nancy asked.

"I don't know." His heart was still beating way to quickly in his chest. "Do you see anymore blood?"

"No." she said, turning to the trees opposite them.

Jonathan tried calming his nerves, told himself to get a grip and a hold of the situation but that was easier said than done. His steps felt loud and heavy as they carried him deeper into the quiet forest, the leaves under his shoes making the most thundering noise he ever heard. His flashlight only gave him so much coverage as the darkness around him seemed to encircle him more and more. He thought about his brother, about how he used to be scared of the dark, the monsters under his bed and the way he would sometimes sneak into Jonathan's room in the middle of the night because he couldn't sleep. The thought of Will alone in this forrest, scared and fearful, made him grip his gun that much tighter.

When he heard Nancy scream his name, he whipped around so violently he thought he might twist his neck.

"Nancy!"

Running as quickly as he could, he went back to the place he'd last seen her and found her backpack and the baseball bat lying forgotten

on the floor. He picked up her rucksack and looked around, frantically trying to spot her in the darkness.

“Nancy?”

No answer.

“Nancy! Nancy, where are you?”

He turned in circles, his voice growing louder and louder as he called for her but he didn’t hear a reply.

She was gone.

She was just gone.

2. The Monster in you, the Monster in me

Summary for the Chapter:

What happens after the events of the forest.

He was lying in bed with Nancy Wheeler.

HE was lying in bed with NANCY WHEELER.

Jonathan swallowed for the hundredth time and kept telling himself to just be still and drift off but apart from the obvious threat of a monster that lived in a place so gruesome he couldn't even imagine, it was the fact that he was lying in bed with Nancy Wheeler that made it almost impossible for him to close his eyes and simply sleep.

Sleep. Next to Nancy. In her bed. Jesus Christ.

It wasn't like that though, he wasn't even under the covers,...it wasn't...romantic.

She'd been scared. Terribly, horribly scared. Jonathan recalled the moments after he'd pulled her out of that tree trunk, the way she'd trembled in his arms, the way his throat had constricted with the effort of not crushing her closer to him still.

When he couldn't find her, he'd panicked. Her screams ringing in his ears, the thought of something happening to her, when the last thing

he'd said had been an unkind remark, made in the spur of the moment, was almost unbearable.

But she was here now. She was alive.

He saw Nancy stir slightly, hoping her dreams would give her some piece after all she'd been through tonight.

Jonathan was facing her, his hand absently on the gun in between them.

He thought about the way she had described what she'd seen on the car ride back to her place.

Her voice had been unsteady and he'd ensured her she wouldn't need to speak about it but Nancy had simply shaken her head and started talking, about the faceless monster, about how cold it had been, how dark and how the air around her had simply felt all wrong.

She'd kept wiping her hands on her jeans, said all she wanted was a shower, to get all the grime and dirt off of her, the smell of that place. She was still shaking by the time he climbed in through her bedroom window and Jonathan had put his jacket around her shoulders and simply sat with her in silence for a bit. He would have liked to be better at this, at comforting people, but he didn't really have much practise except for Will.

Will, who was still missing.

But he couldn't leave her like this, not after tonight and he wasn't quite sure if it was for her benefit or for his own. She'd clung to him so desperately in the forrest.

"Can you just come up here?"

The words rung in his ears and he recalled the way he'd awkwardly climbed on top of the covers, not wanting to crowd her. Jonathan had never slept next to someone who wasn't family.

Not that he was doing much sleeping now.

The forrest seemed far away but the danger hung over them like a cloud. He still couldn't believe she'd just went into that tree opening, all by herself. Nancy Wheeler was much braver then anyone he knew.

- "...just another suburban girl who thinks she's rebelling by doing exactly what every other suburban girl does..." -

He was abruptly taken out of his thoughts when she turned in her sleep and faced him, eyes still firmly closed.

Her body was suddenly much nearer to his and when she exhaled, her breath reached his cheeks like a soft flutter of wind.

Jonathan was aware of the blush spreading all the way up from his

neck. He felt like a creep, staring at Nancy while she was sleeping, so he scooted back to the edge of the bed but then she moved her arm as if she sensed him disappearing and her hand was almost next to his now, so close to touching him, a breath apart.

He closed his eyes and suppressed the urge to reach out and diminish the distance between their fingers, just for a moment. Instead, he forced himself to lie still and move as little as possible, the effort of which eventually carried him into a deep, dreamless sleep.

She was smiling again. It was timid and gentle and probably Jonathan's greatest achievement of the last 2 days.

"Your mum doesn't knock?"

It was all he'd said, just a stupid thought coming straight out, without any involvement of his brain because he'd been preoccupied by her warm hand, holding so firmly onto his own. The thought of them reaching for each other at the same time because of a fright, made something inside him ache in a way he didn't understand.

Nancy wasn't looking at him but her small smile remained and it made it all the more difficult for him to think of something else to say. Mercifully, she saved him the trouble.

“We should leave, before she decides to come and find me again.”

He didn't know what had happened. One minute, he tried to get Nancy to leave so she wouldn't have to listen to any more of Steve's insults and in the next he was blindly punching the guy so hard that his knuckles hurt.

The things he'd said about his family had pushed him over the edge but the stuff about Nancy is what got him there in the first place. Nancy, the slut, Wheeler. How dare he.

The wound of the last few days was still bleeding freely and Steve had fed right into it. Dark forests, monsters, Will, so alone, Nancy screaming, fear so palpable it made his mouth go dry, her tears, the tightness of her embrace, her smile, just moments ago, the way she'd looked at him and said 'You, definitely you.'

It all became a blur in his head when he collided with the hood of a car and then, after a series of punches, the ground. Somewhere he heard Nancy shout his name, not the way she had last night though and it didn't reach him as such.

Hers was suddenly a far off voice while white noise filled his ears and catapulted him into this fit of rage.

Jonathan didn't hurt people but in that moment, all he wanted to do

was break Steve's nose.

Which is what got him into this mess, sitting at a police station, waiting for his mum to come and pick him up. Wonderful.

She'd be furious, worried and probably have that look on her face, the one he could barely stand on a good day, when he didn't just screw everything up once again.

Nancy returned while he was still lost in thought, clutching a small towel in her hand.

"Found some ice."

When he tried taking it, his handcuffs got in the way and he immediately felt like an idiot and wondered briefly what she thought of him now. Jonathan Byers, human disaster.

But Nancy didn't even waver and lift the towel to his head, pressing it, ever so gently, to his throbbing cheekbone.

Instant relief flooded through him and he sighed audible. Nancy squirmed next to him.

"Is everything ok?"

Am I making you uncomfortable? Are you mad at me? Do you regret going monster hunting with me? Do you still think I'm a creep?

Would you rather be somewhere else right now, instead of stuck here with me? Why are you still here?

These are things Jonathan couldn't ask, thoughts he couldn't voice but it didn't stop him from thinking them.

Nancy could have gone home a long time ago. She didn't punch anyone. She wasn't in trouble at all.

"Yeah.", she said. "Everything's fine."

And she looked at him then, from underneath her long lashes, with an expression so gentle and almost shy that Jonathan was certain she mistook him for someone else in that moment. People just didn't look at him like that....ever.

He tried to smile but his brain didn't really cooperate (he felt her fingers brush his hair by accident) and he was sure it looked more like a grimace than anything else.

Nevertheless, Jonathan couldn't deny that he was very glad to have Nancy next to him right then and there, even if she did make his head feel a little fuzzy. That might have had something to do with the fist fight as well though.

Who's to say.

Author's Note:

I might continue this! I love diving into Jonathans

head. What do you guys think?